

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 002117

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/08/2013

TAGS: [PREL](#) [IZ](#) [JO](#)

SUBJECT: TFI201: AMBASSADOR RAISES U.S. CONCERNS ABOUT
JORDANIAN MEDIA COVERAGE OF IRAQ WITH FOREIGN MINISTER

REF: FBIS GMP20030407000170

Classified By: PolCouns Doug Silliman for reasons 1.5 (B) and (D)

AMBASSADOR: JORDANIAN PRESS PRESENTS A BIASED PICTURE

1. (S) The Ambassador raised with Foreign Minister Marwan Muasher April 8 continued U.S. concerns over the unbalanced coverage in the Jordanian media of events in Iraq. MFA Officer Samer Dabbas and PolCouns also sat in. The Ambassador cited for Muasher several examples of factually incorrect coverage in the Jordanian media of alleged coalition military actions, as well as examples of a distinctly pro-Iraq slant in coverage that is otherwise factually true. Such coverage only fans the flames of anti-U.S. hatred and could make it more difficult for the U.S. to sustain its important programs in the long term.

MUASHER: LOCAL PRESS REFLECTS POPULAR ATTITUDES

2. (S) Muasher said that he, too, is concerned with the "hysterical" nature of the local press, not because it is leading popular opinion, but rather because it reflects the strong popular opposition to the war. The GOJ has "done as much as we can do" to influence the mostly-independent local media coverage of Iraq through Jordan television and the government-controlled al-Rai newspaper. He noted, however, that local Arabic papers had not picked up an interview he had given April 7 in which he talked about post-war Iraq. "It is too sensitive yet even to admit there will be a different Iraqi government after the war." He said the GOJ remains seized with the task of managing public opinion in the longer term.

U.S. CAN DO THINGS TO CHANGE ARAB MINDS

3. (S) Muasher admitted to personal concern over the possibility that strongly negative anti-U.S. views could affect U.S. programs in Jordan. "I have never seen anti-American feeling so strong." The U.S. has the power, he argued, to change public opinion by its actions. He made several suggestions.

-- "Don't make this look like an occupation." One statement by a senior USG official about the need for a permanent military presence in Iraq "can wipe out all the good statements from President Bush and Secretary Powell" about the U.S. desire to leave Iraq as soon as possible.

-- Give the UN a role. In the Arab world, Muasher argued, the UN stamp on post-Iraq governance will convey a degree of popular legitimacy that the U.S. and UK cannot. (Note: The official news agency Petra carried reports of a visit by King Abdullah to the Foreign Ministry April 7 (ref) in which the King is quoted as asking Muasher to work to "prevent the USA and Britain from administering Iraq's affairs alone." End note.)

-- Give Arabs a role as well. Muasher recommended close consultation with Arab governments leading to a turnover of authority to a true Iraqi government "in a reasonable period."

-- Make concrete progress on the MEPP. Publication of the roadmap is a "great" first step, but the U.S. will have to be seen as pressing Israel to make concrete concessions in order to win back any Arab public trust.

JORDAN TO SEEK POST WAR CONSULTATIONS WITH U.S.

4. (S) Muasher said that he hopes to travel to Washington to consult on post-war arrangement and MEPP issues soon after the war ends. King Abdullah also hopes to visit the U.S. at an appropriate time in the not too distant future. One of the issues of importance to Jordan will be the role of INC leader Ahmad Chalabi in post-war Iraq. Chalabi, Muasher said, is accused of serious financial crimes in Jordan, and his presence in a senior position in a new Iraqi government

will cause serious problems for the GOJ.

COMMENT

15. (S) The GOJ hears and understands our concern regarding unbalanced media coverage in Jordan. It is a concern that -- in their own interests -- they share themselves. Their willingness to challenge that coverage directly, however, is circumscribed by the strong popular opposition to the war which has inspired the coverage in the first place.
GNEHM